

# EMPLOYING LOCAL WISDOM BASED SHORT STORIES FOR TEACHING ENGLISH AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

*by* Aninda Hima

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**EMPLOYING LOCAL WISDOM BASED SHORT STORIES  
FOR TEACHING ENGLISH AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

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**Abstract** In the Indonesian educational system, The English as a foreign language has an important position (Fristiara, 2017). It affects the number of people learning English that increases every year, beginning at younger and younger ages (Rokhayani, 2017). However, the process of teaching English in elementary schools becomes problematic today. According to the situation analysis, it was found that many elementary school teachers lack of ability and knowledge in teaching EYL especially in preparing the materials. In regard to the issue, this community service project was designed to upgrade the teachers' ability in designing English short stories book as their teaching material as well as teaching the stories in the classrooms. In addition, the teachers were also expected to be able to include local wisdom in their short stories. The project implementation falls into three phases as follows (1) collecting all short stories which contain local wisdom (2) translating the short stories, and (3) implementing the short stories in the classroom.

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**INTRODUCTION**

<sup>2</sup> Due to the introduction of primary English Language Teaching (ELT) <sup>2</sup> worldwide, teaching English to young learners has become very popular in recent

years (Panteeva, 2015). English is one of the subjects taught in Indonesia from pre-school (Kindergarten or Play Group), Elementary School, Junior High School, Senior High School and University. In the Indonesian educational system, English as a foreign language has an important position (Fristiara, 2017). It affects to the number of people learning English in Indonesia increasing every year, beginning at earlier and earlier ages (Rokhayani, 2017).

This trend comes up for several reasons. First, there is a belief 'the younger the better' assuming that age has a positive correlation with the success of acquiring the second language. It is deemed better to learn a foreign language at the early age since children acquire languages including the sound system, and the other language competences more quickly and only need less effort as well as greater ease than adults do (Panteeva, 2015). This is because they can do natural acquisition processes (Uysal & Yavuz, 2015). Moreover, if they start to acquire language earlier, they will have opportunities to make some improvement over time that can lead them to achieve greater proficiency by the end of the learning process.

Second, English is respected as a major global language. Economic globalization has forced the universal use of English and many governments believe it is necessary to have English speaking personnel in order to compete (Gimenez, 2009; Mufwene, 2010). It is supported by Pasi (2001) and Sturza (2005) that the English language is the key to international understanding and world regulation, under the phenomena called globalization. Knowledge of the English language has indeed appeared as a dominant tool for development and advancement throughout the world to struggle for self-sufficiency and success (Johnson & Johnson, 2009)

Third, the parents' acceptance that their children will obtain a better academic achievement and career opportunities by mastering English skills, have directed to raise the number of English for Young Learners (EYL) programs (Gimenez, 2009; Zein, 2017; Menheere & Hooge, 2010). The parents believe an early start of learning will affect to the better learning outcomes (Chang, 2008).

As stated before that teaching young learners is obviously different from teaching adults. Hence, the teaching of EYL programs can be a very demanding task (Onu, 2013). In order to make English teaching successful, it assumed that the important point is that the teachers should know the students' interest and motivation in learning English, regarding achieving the goal of learning. Therefore, an English teacher has to consider some factors including the book used (Arikan, 2014).

In accordance with the curriculum 2013 which is implementing integrated thematic learning, English is still being taught in elementary school. It is supported by (Setyaningrum, Sumarsono, & Lestiono, 2014) who found that 50% percent of public and private elementary schools in Batu agree if English is still taught in schools either as a local content or extra-curricular subject. However, the process of teaching English in elementary schools becomes problematic today. A preliminary research was then conducted to identify the problems and issues faced by the partner schools in Batu. Based on the result of the interview with the teachers and the headmasters of the schools, the project team found some problems.

The first problem is that there is an instruction from the government that English should be taught as a local content. It means that the schools have the autonomy to include English in their curriculum. Second, the classroom teachers that mostly did not have English educational background since they graduated from Elementary school Education were required to teach or lead the English subject in the classroom. It makes them get difficulties in teaching English because their English Language proficiency is very low. The teachers, therefore, find themselves teaching English without adequate training in teaching English to young learners. Third, although there were also English teachers in the schools, they do not have enough knowledge about young learners' pedagogy. Fourth, the teachers also have difficulties in finding culturally appropriate teaching materials. They just used the *Lembar Kerja Siswa* (students' worksheet) as the guidance in teaching English in the classrooms. Fifth, there was no standard for the implementation of English as a local content subject since it is not to be tested in

the final examination in elementary schools. Nevertheless, the State Junior High Schools in Batu requires an English score for new student enrollment. This condition makes the elementary schools must include English in their curriculum so that they can provide the English grades for the students to enroll in Junior High School. From those cases, it could be concluded that the existence of English subject in elementary schools today (especially in Batu) becomes unclear.

Since the focus of the community service project is in the preparation stage of the teaching and learning English for Young Learners process, the project team then initiates to make a priority of the problems faced by both partner schools to overcome. As previously mentioned, the teachers lack training and knowledge of EYL especially in providing culturally appropriate teaching materials. Therefore, the project team and the partner schools agree that the focus of the project is on upgrading the teachers' ability in designing English short stories book as their teaching material as well as teaching the stories in the classrooms. The teachers think that by joining the training they will have a capability to prepare the materials for their own English class later.

## METHOD

This project was done through a community service program which was relevant to the project team's (the lecturers) professional background in two partner schools (elementary schools) in Batu. The program aimed to assist the elementary school teachers in Batu to teach English for Young Learners (EYL) especially in developing materials of English short stories which contains local wisdom. Through this paper, the writers describe the activities conducted when the community service project was running.

### *Participants*

During five training sessions, 12 teachers from two different Elementary schools in Batu who taught grade 1 to 6 were involved. They were selected because as previously mentioned that they were required to teach English in their classrooms although they did not have an adequate capability in teaching English

for Young Learners (TEYL). Through this project, it is expected that they can later provide their own materials before coming to the classrooms.

#### *Instruments*

Since the writer needed to capture all the activities conducted by the project team and the participants during the training sessions, the instruments used in this project were observation sheets and also video recorder.

#### *Procedure*

All the steps in conducting this community service project were done to give solutions to the main problems the teachers encountered in the classrooms. There were several steps to train the teachers to have a capability in providing short stories as the material as well as bring them to the class:

1. Selecting Stories
2. Translating the stories
3. Teaching practice

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### *Findings*

Based on the observations done during the community service project, the implementation of upgrading the teachers' ability in teaching EYL covered: 1. Selecting stories, 2. translating the stories, 3. Teaching Practice. The explanations of each stage are as follows.

**Table 1. The Short Stories to Translate**

No.	Title (Indonesian)	Title (English)	Grade
1	Kelinci Pemalas	The Lazy Rabbit	1
2	Gagak Sang Pembohong	The Liar Crow	
3	Nelayan dan Ikan Mas	The Fisherman and the Golden Fish	2
4	Semut dan Belalang	An Ant and A Grasshopper	
5	Kiki, Kelinci yang Tak Mau Kalah	Kiki, Rabbit Who Will Not Lose	3
6	Rino Si Badak Jawa	Rino the Javanese Rhino	



7	Mbah Batu (Batu)	Mbah Batu (Batu)	4
8	Candi Songgoriti	Songgoriti Temple	
9	Wendit	Wendit	5
10	Roro Jonggrang	RoroJonggrang	
11	CandiSingosari	Singosari Temple	6
12	Ki Ageng Gribig	Ki Ageng Gribig	

### 1. Story Selection

This activity was conducted during the two-day meeting. In meeting 1, all the teachers and the team of the community service project collected all the stories in the thematic books that also have been used in teaching English in the classroom for grade 1 to 6. The team also added some legends from Batu. From this meeting, there were 25 texts including 19 stories and 10 legends from Malang that had been collected.

Further, the agenda for meeting 2 was to sort out the texts that would be translated. In this meeting, the teachers and the team agreed that there were 12 texts (6 short fiction stories taken from the thematic book and 6 legends from Malang) to be included. The short fiction stories are The Lazy Rabbit, The Liar Crow, The Fisherman and the Golden Fish, an Ant and a Grasshopper, "Kiki" Rabbit Who Will Not Lose and Rino the Javanese Rhino. Meanwhile, the legends are Mbah Batu (Batu), Songgoriti Temple, Wendit, Roro Jonggrang, Singosari Temple and Ki Ageng Gribig.

### 2. Translating the stories

In meeting 3, the workshop on translating stories was given to the teachers. The project team introduced the topic by providing an example of the translation of a short story entitled "Mbah Batu" then asked the participants to analyze how the translator transferred L1 to L2 in this story. The next material was "the things to remember" when translating a manuscript such as 1. Knowing the readers, 2. Abridgment, 3. Omission, 4. Language Adjustment. The team explained it is important for the teachers to know the readers, "Who are they? The 1st graders? 2nd? 3rd? 4th? 5th? Or 6th?" she said. By knowing the readers, the teachers can

decide the level of difficulty of the text as well as adjust the vocabulary size for the students. The next aspect was *abridgment* which allows the translator to understand the content of the story before they started to translate the manuscript. Also, the translator required to simplify the language to adjust the readers' proficiency level. Meanwhile, during the drafting stage, the next important aspect to consider is the omission aspect in which the ideological issues and the local wisdom should be raised up. Finally, the last stage is an adaptation. In the *adaptation*, the translator ought to adjust the process of transferring L1 and L2.

Further, the teachers were assigned to work in pairs and given a sentence to translate before they finally shared what they had translated to the others. After all the materials had been delivered to the participants in this meeting, then they started to translate the short stories previously selected into English. In this session, the teachers were given a responsibility to pick one selected text based on the difficulty level of the grade they teach. After doing this task, they should send it to the team through *email* or *Whatsapp*.

Afterward, the project team gave some comments and suggestions on the translated works done by the teachers. The comments were about the errors and mistakes occurred in the short stories translated. The errors and mistakes were dominated by the grammatical, diction, and also spelling issues. After all the participants edited and revised their work based on the trainers' comments, they submitted their translated work that later would be compiled.

### 3. Teaching Practice

Before going to the step that was practice teaching short stories to the students, the participants were trained on how to prepare the lesson plan. The training included how to choose the materials, the media, and the activities arrangement. In preparing the lesson plan, the project team first explained that a teachers should know the ultimate goal of the topic as the teachers should know what the students can do after learning the topic. The teachers may then break down the ultimate goal into several objectives which can be achieved in some



meetings. In other words, at this stage, the teachers should know the length of the class period for each topic.

After deciding the goal of the topic, the teachers started to select the materials and the media. Since this was for teaching the students by using short stories, the materials prepared were obviously the text that was appropriate for the students' level. For the media, they could be in the form of pictures, dolls, or puppets.

When coming to the practice of teaching, the teachers prepared the media such as the picture of owl and rabbit which were the characters in the story of The Lazy Rabbit. The first thing done in the practice of teaching this story is brainstorming the students about the name of animals in English they knew.

Upon entering the core activities, the model teachers introduced the owl character and the rabbit in the story using the image media. The model teachers also gave names to both figures, namely *Owl* for owls and *Rabby* for rabbits; the selection of names is adapted to the English of the two animals so that the students are easier to memorize. In storytelling, model teachers always do it in two languages. After the story in English, the model teachers directly interpreted it in Bahasa Indonesia. This is done so that the students can still follow the story.

After the story ends, the model teachers gave reinforcement in the form of moral values that were taken from the story if they must be diligent in learning English. In addition, the reinforcement of new vocabulary about animals such as owl and rabbit was also done. Right after the participants doing practice teaching, the trainers evaluated the participants' performance on that meeting. The trainers gave some feedbacks afterward. They said that the teachers should check the pronunciation as well as the spelling of every single word the mentioned.

**Table 2. Community Service Agenda**

No	Meeting	Agenda	Descriptions
1	1-2	Selecting stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>collected all the stories used in the teaching of English in the classrooms</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sorting out the stories to translate</li> </ul>
2	3-4	translating the stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• training in translating manuscripts</li> <li>• translating the stories individually</li> <li>• giving comments, suggestions, and correction on the translated works done by the participants</li> </ul>
3	5	Teaching Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• training on preparing a lesson plan</li> <li>• conducting teaching practice</li> <li>• evaluating the participants' performance in teaching students by using short stories</li> </ul>

### Discussions

As previously explained, the community service project aimed at upgrading the teachers' ability in teaching English to elementary school students. This project covered: 1. selecting stories, 2. translating the stories, 3. teaching practice,

In the selecting stories stage, the team and the participants decided to choose the stories by considering the students' level in terms of vocabulary size and structure also the contextual aspect of the stories. It is done because not any story is appropriate for young learners. If the teachers want their learners to benefit from reading a story, this story should possess certain qualities. Loukia, 2006) mentioned the characteristics of good stories for young learners in the matter of the: 1. language level; 2. content; 3. visuals; 4. motivation; 5 language learning potential. Further, she elaborated that stories should include the appropriate language level with regard to vocabulary and grammar structures. The content should be interesting, fun, motivating, memorable, and can encourage

participation. Moreover, the visuals ought to be attractive, and potential to work with. The stories should also motivate the readers to imagine, gain curiosity, draw personal experience. In terms of language learning potential, the stories should facilitate the readers to develop skills in practicing language, recycling, predicting. The last, the stories should also enhance the readers to learn other subjects and target culture.

In addition to the short stories from the thematic book, the team and the teachers also include the legends from Malang. In selecting a story for young learners, it is logical to choose a story with a familiar plot and characters or at least with familiar situations (Shin, 2016). Thus, the children will be easier to link new information with their background knowledge and the input will be more comprehensible for them.

The next agenda of this project is giving a workshop on translation. The materials delivered to the teachers are the things to consider when translating manuscripts such as 1. Knowing the readers, 2. Abridgment, 3. Omission, 4. Language Adjustment. Weeks, Swerissen, & Belfrage (2007); Pan & Puente, (2005) have suggested some common stages involved in the process of translation that are determination of the relevance or context, forward-translation of the research instruments (i.e. topic guides), backward-translation, examination of the translated meaning in both source and target languages, and then finally revisiting the whole process to get similar interpretations. Sanders-reio, Alexander, Reio, & Newman (2014) also suggested four aspects that can be used when translating to ensure the relevance of the content: 1. semantic (similarity of meaning), 2. Technical (method of data collection is comparable), criterion (translated terms are consistent with the norms of each culture), and conceptual equivalence (also called cultural equivalence, having the same meaning and relevance in two different cultures).

Further, when the teachers practice teaching the students by using storytelling technique, she always uses Indonesian after reading the story in English. It is done because when teaching a foreign language to young learners, the teachers need to remember that they are still building on their first language

vocabulary and are still in the process of acquiring and organizing the concepts of foreign language itself (Puskás, 2016).

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The challenges faced by the Elementary school teachers in teaching English in the classrooms lead the project team to conduct a training not only to teach but also to prepare the materials (a short story with the local wisdom) for them. Started by selecting Indonesian short stories to be translated into English, the training then continued by giving tips and tricks how to translate manuscripts from Indonesian into English. After the participants (the teachers) had done translating the stories, the team gave feedbacks to them. Further, the project was continued by giving materials on how to prepare the lesson plan in teaching the students by using short stories before the teachers were asked to practice teaching in the classroom and were evaluated. The last step of the project was compiling the translated short stories done by the teachers and the team to be a supplementary book for teaching short stories to the students in the classrooms.

In the area of teaching EYL, there are still so many issues need to cope. Therefore, the training for the teachers in elementary school especially in teaching English is essentially needed today. The authors give a suggestion to the next community service project team to conduct training and mentoring to the elementary school teachers especially in teaching EYL by using other materials.

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## APPENDIX



### Kelinci Pemalas

Burung hantu membuka sekolah untuk binatang di hutan.

Mereka akan belajar membaca

Burung hantu memang memang guru yang baik.

Ia mengajar para binatang dengan sabra.

Hanya Si Putih Kelinci yang tidak ikut.

Ia lebih senang bermain saja di hutan.

Suatu hari Si Putih tersesat.

Ia tidak dapat membaca petunjuk arah pulang.

Si Putih sedih karena tidak belajar membaca.

*(Dikutip dari Buku Tematik Terpadu Kurikulum 2013, Kelas 1)*

### The Lazy Rabbit

The owl opens a school for animals in the forest

They learn to read

The owl is a good teacher

He teaches all animals very well

But, the rabbit does not want to learn

He always plays in the forest

One day, the rabbit gets lost

He cannot read the sign to go home

He is sad because he never learns reading



### Ki Ageng Gribig

Ki Ageng Gribig, ulama besar yang waktu mudanya bernama Wasibagno Timur, adalah putra Kiai Ageng Gribig (Kyai Ageng Tinom putra Browijoyo Mojopahit) dari Ngibig (menantu Sunan Giri) Saat Wasibagno berumur belasan tahun, ia sudah ditinggal wafat oleh ayah-ibundanya. Ia tidak mau mengikuti tradisi kerajaan, melainkan memilih jalan hidup bertapa. Usai mendapatkan wangsit dari kakeknya, yaitu Sunan Giri, berangkatlah Wasibagno ke arah barat. Sesampainya di hutan Merbabu di lereng Gunung Merapi, ia memutuskan mulai bertapa (semedi) dibawah bendungan Kali Bogowondo. Di situlah ia bertapa bertahun-tahun lamanya. Mendengar kejadian itu, Sunan Kalijaga dari Kadilangu Demak segera menemui Sunan Tembayat, yang juga disebut Sunan Pandanaran, untuk memberitahukan bahwa di bawah Kali Bogowondo ada seorang pertapa yang masih punya hubungan darah dengan Sunan Tembayat. Sunan Kalijaga meminta agar Sunan Tembayat mau menemui dan mengajarkan ilmu kebendaan, serta yang menyangkut ilmu serengat (syari'ah), hakikat dan ma'rifat. Setelah jelas apa yang dikehendaki Sunan Kalijaga, berangkatlah Sunan Tembayat menemui Wasibagno. Di tempat pertapaan itulah terjadi perdebatan antara Wasibagno dengan Sunan Tembayat mengenai ilmu yang dimaksud Sunan Kalijaga. Wasibagno merasa kalah, dan ia pun bersujud serta menyatakan diri untuk masuk Islam dan meminta segera diberi pelajaran tata cara bersembahyang.

Setelah mendapat pelajaran dari Sunan tembayat, Wasibagno pun segeraberangkat ke arah timur Kali Bogowondo. Ia berganti nama menjadi Ki Ageng Gribig, nama ayahnya. Di sebuah hutan jati, ia memutuskan mulai babat alas dan membangun masjid serta mendirikan padukuhan. Bertahun-tahun lamanya Ki Ageng Gribig babat alas sendiri. Kemudian, ia memperdalam ilmu yang didapatnya dari Sunan Tembayat. apa yang diinginkan akhirnya

terwujud. Padukuhan yang dibangun mulai didatangi orang. Konon, suatu saat menjelang salat dluhur, Ki Ageng Gribig membunyikan tabuh. Tanpa disangka, suara itu terdengar sampai ke Mataram yang saat itu sedang punya hajat wisudan (pelantikan) Sultan Agung. Sultan Agung, tertarik dan memerintahkan mencari asal suara untuk diajak ke Mataram. Kemudian, padukuhan yang dibangun Ki Ageng Gribig diberi hadiah sebagai tanah perdikan. Sebagai gantinya, Ki Ageng Gribig diwajibkan ikut hadir setiap peringatan hari kelahiran Sultan Agung di Mataram. Selain itu Ki Ageng Gribig juga diberi hadiah histeri, yang tidak lain Raden Ayu Emas, adik Sultan Agung sendiri. (Dikutip dari *Bilingual Nusantara Folklores*)

### Ki Ageng Gribig

Ki Ageng Gribig, a great Islamic wise man, was the son of Kyai Ageng Gribig (or known as Kyai Ageng Tinom, the son of Browijoyo Majapahit) and the grand son of Sunan Giri. His original name was Wasibagno. Wasibagno became an orphan when he was very young. After the death of his parents, he dedicated his life for meditation.

After having received a holy message from his grandfather, Sunan Giri, he went to the west and arrived at Merbabu woods on the slope of Merapi Mountain. There, he meditated under the dam of Bogowondo River for several years.

One day, Sunan Kalijaga, heard a news about a hermit under the dam of Bogowondo. Hearing this news, Sunan Kalijaga went to see Sunan Tembayat, and asked him to see this hermit and teach him Islamic knowledge.

Sunan Tembayat finally met Wasibagno in his meditation. Then, he tried to convince Wasibagno to follow his Islamic teaching. After a long debate, Wasibagno was finally willing to follow the Islamic teachings and became the follower of Sunan Tembayat.

After learning Islam with Sunan Tembayat, Wasibagno decided to go to the east of Bogowondo River and changed his name to Ki Ageng Gribig. When he was in a forest, he decided to build a mosque and Islamic school by himself. Many people came to visit his mosque and study Islam there.

When *Dzuhur* time came, Ki Ageng Gribig always hit a large drum up to call people to pray. The sound of the drum reached Mataram and heard by Sultan Agung. Sultan Agung felt excited to the sound and sent his troops to find the source of the sound. Then, Ki Ageng Gribig's Islamic school was freed from any taxation. However, Ki Ageng Gribig had to attend every ceremony in Mataram. Ki Ageng Gribig was also married to the younger sister of Sultan Agung, Raden Ayu Mas.

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